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TAGS: PREL AORC UNSC BE CG SU IR KN
SUBJECT: BELGIAN AND THE UN -- VIEWS OF A NEW UNSC MEMBER

Classified By: DCM William Imbrie, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: IO A/S Silverberg's December 6 meetings with the Belgian MFA indicated that Belgium and the U.S. were in general agreement on most major issues facing the UN Security Council, apart from some differences on Iran. On Iran, the Belgians said that they thought it appropriate now to agree on a "soft sanctions" approach to build the broadest possible consensus. A/S Silverberg replied that, while consensus was important, it should not come at the cost of a strong and effective UN Security Council resolution that creates tangible costs for Iran in its pursuit of a nuclear weapons capability. The Belgians indicated they want to work closely with the U.S. on North Korea, and urged an increase in pressure on the Bashir regime in Sudan to lessen the regional danger created by the Darfur conflict. The Belgians said unspecified "logistical" problems would prevent their serving on the Council's Counter-terrorism Committee, but expressed willingness to serve on the Iran, Ivory Coast, UNMEE, Working Methods, and Child Soldiers Sanctions Committees. The Belgians urged the U.S. to support renewal of the MONUC mandate in keeping with the transition to an elected government. End summary.

¶2. (U) During a series of December 6 meetings in Brussels, the Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs, Kristen Silverberg, outlined U.S. views and listened to Belgian concerns prior to Belgium's assumption next year of a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council. In addition to a roundtable with regional experts at the MFA, she met for 45 minutes with MFA Secretary General (Permanent Secretary-equivalent) Jan Grauls and other senior officials

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the MFA's International Organizations Division, including acting Director General for Multilateral Affairs Jan Deboutte and International Organizations Director Benedicte Frankinet.

A/S
Silverberg also had two press interviews on the U.S. approach to UN issues, and attended a working lunch with the Chairman of the Belgian Senate's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, Senator Roelant du Vivier, and senior MFA officials.

UNSC Issues

¶3. (C) Iran and North Korea: The Belgians were largely in listening mode as A/S Silverberg detailed U.S. views. In response to MFA SecGen Grauls' suggestion that "soft sanctions" targeted only against nuclear entities might be feasible, A/S Silverberg argued against the idea, maintaining that it was important to pass a strong resolution to create a tangible cost for Iran in its pursuit of a nuclear weapons capability. She urged the Belgians to help the U.S. maintain a spotlight on the behavior of the Iranian government. On North Korea, the Belgians praised UNSCR 1718, which they consider a useful model for dealing with the Iran issue. A/S Silverberg agreed.

¶4. (C) Darfur: To the Belgian MFA, getting a strong international force on the ground was the key next step for dealing with Darfur. Also important was limiting the spread of disorder to Chad and the Central African Republic. The financing of AMIS was also a concern in Brussels. The Belgians noted that the EU had provided almost 75 percent of the funding for AMIS and were disappointed with the results. A/S Silverberg expressed similar concerns about developments in Darfur, where Bashir has managed to stymie early hopes about deployment of an international force. Grauls hoped Special Envoy Natsios would meet with GOB officials when next in the region.

¶5. (C) Lebanon, MEPP, and Iraq: The Belgians urged a renewed push on finding a broad settlement for the Israel-Palestinian dispute, based on the road map, and focused on the "real issues" hindering progress toward a two state solution. To that end, the Belgians said they would continue to support the International Temporary Mechanism, and to press the Israelis on the Palestinian tax collection issue. The Belgian side made clear that FM De Gucht opposes holding a new international conference "until the time is ripe." The Belgians said they are generally satisfied with UNIFIL's performance, but indicated it was necessary to wait before making any permanent assessment -- they had been satisfied with the organization's work prior to the recent war also. The Belgians said they had no formal view as yet on renewal or termination of the UNMOVIC mandate, but wondered how to keep UNMOVIC's expertise available to the UNSC.

¶6. (C) On Lebanon, A/S Silverberg said the U.S. considers the new UNIFIL mandate to be a positive, strengthening factor. The U.S. remained focused on preventing weapons smuggling across the Syrian border and on securing Lebanese parliamentary approval of the international tribunal for investigation of the Hariri murder. Referring to Iraq, Silverberg indicated that the U.S. wants to see more UN officials active in Iraq and the UNMOVIC mandate terminated, as requested by the Iraqi authorities.

Belgian Participation on UNSC Committees

¶7. (U) In response to queries, MFA SecGen Grauls said the Belgians would not be able to participate on the CTC Committee. He urged the U.S. not to press Belgium further. Belgium was interested in serving on the following committees:

- Iran Sanctions
- Ivory Coast
- Child Soldiers Working Group
- Working Methods Working Group
- UNMEE Working Group

MONUC Renewal

¶ 8. (C) Grauls urged the U.S. to support renewal of the MONUC mandate when it came up for a vote in February. The mandate would need to be suitably adjusted to reflect the new elected status of the regime in Kinshasa. MONUC was needed, he argued, to promote stability in Central Africa. In addition, he thought it necessary to continue a body like the current CIAT organization that advised President Kabila on the transition process. He thought the group should include key supporting states now in CIAT, plus IBRD/IMF, and the EU. The SRSG should chair the new group. He proposed including this in the next MONUC renewal resolution. Having an organization of experienced people able to link stabilization/reconstruction and political issues had proven enormously valuable. A/S Silverberg said she would look into the issue.

Public Diplomacy

¶ 9. (U) A/S Silverberg led a lively discussion of UN issues at a lunch hosted by the DCM. Other guests included Director General Deboutte, Director Frankinet, and Senator Roelant du Vivier, Chairman of the Belgian Senate Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee. A/S Silverberg expressed disappointment with the new Human Rights Council for its focus on Israel instead of gross human rights violators such as Burma and the DPRK and indicated the U.S. had not yet decided whether to run in the next HRC election. She expressed interest when several participants suggested that European countries speak individually on topics, rather than with one "EU" voice.
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